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ABSTRACT

This paper traces the development of interpersonal skills and characterizes the essential features of social interaction as they change from infancy to adolescence. It is demonstrated that, at each life stage, the quality of social relationships is dependent on the person's capacity for interpersonal closeness, his ability to use language, and his cognitive maturity. The developments of the six life stages are discussed. During infancy, rudimentary social skills and an underlying sense of being emotionally connected with people are established. The expressiveness or retentiveness of speech and a general level of abstractness of speech are dominant characteristics of toddlerhood. Egocentrism decreases and language skills increase in significance during early school age. Middle school age brings an awareness of behavior norms and an increasing capacity for compromise. During early adolescence, an upsurge in egocentric concern is evident in regard to self-presentation; cognitively, there is a growth in conceptual skills characterized by the development of formal thought. Finally, in late adolescence, the individual's personality is consolidated enough to produce an integrated interpersonal style which communicates basic personal needs and social attitudes. (SDH)

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL INTERACTION FROM INFANCY THROUGH ADOLESCENCE [1]

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The purpose of this paper is to trace the development of interpersonal skills and to characterize the essential features of social interaction as they change from infancy through adolescence. A person makes his impact on the social environment through his achievements and his interpersonal behavior. In the process of developing intimate relationships, the individual must rely almost entirely on interpersonal skills. An interpersonal style becomes an essential element of adult personality. In this paper, I will draw from research and theory in the developmental literature in order to describe the process of the evolution of interpersonal style. Attention will be given to both cognitive and emotional components of social interaction. After describing the essential features of interpersonal style, the paper will conclude with some consideration of the implications of interpersonal behavior for adult development.

Infancy

The growing body of research on mother-infant interaction, supports a view of the infant as an active, social being (Bell, 1974, Lewis and Lee Painter, 1974; Brazelton, Koslowski and Main, 1974; and Richards and Bernal, 1972). As Bowlby (1958) suggests the infant has a large repertoire of behaviors which serve to sensitize the caretaker to its needs and to insure contact between the

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caretaker and the infant. The infant's smile, his cry, his babbling, his grasping, his gazing and his eventual motor tracking are the fundamental building blocks for social interaction. Lewis (1974) has described specific patterns of sequential interactive behaviors some of which are initiated by parents and others of which are initiated by infants. He suggests that infants have significant impact in evolving caretaking behavior from their parents. In a recent study comparing an infant's responses to strangers to his responses to the mother, Carter (1973) reports that infants demonstrated positive social responses to the stranger including looking, smiling and a delay in following the mother. He suggests that the stranger is not fear provoking, but rather perceived as an additional source of complexity in the environment. Certainly by the end of the first year of life, the infant can be described as an active social agent in his environment using facial expressions, vocalizations and motor activity to engage other people.

In addition to seeing the infant as one who has social skills, we also must note the large amount of research on the infant's emerging social attachments. (Ainsworth, 1964; Ainsworth and Bell, 1970; and Schaffer and Emerson, 1964) During the second half of the first year of life, the infant clearly forms a strong emotional bond with his caretaker. The exact relationship between the bond with the caretaker and the child's ability to form other personal relationships is not fully understood at this time. The research on attachment demonstrates that children differ in the extent to which their caretaker serves as a source of security for further exploration. Some children remain close to their

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mothers in a strange setting while others use their mothers as a central island of security from which they readily venture out. We tend to see the former child as insecure and the latter as securely attached. The ability to differentiate the caretaker from the self and the ability to form a bond of love with the caretaker are essential to the subsequent formation of an effective interpersonal style.

In summary, during infancy, the rudimentary skills for evoking a social response and the underlying sense of emotional connectedness with other people are established. These are seen as two critical components for the development of interpersonal style.

Toddlerhood

Piaget (1969) describes language as the most complex form of representational thinking. With the acquisition of vocabulary and grammar, the toddler can convey his own thoughts and be relatively certain that he will be understood. Language itself requires an accommodation to a culturally shared system of symbols. The child must learn the specific words, word orders and transformation that will most directly convey his thoughts. At the beginning of toddlerhood, the child has a very limited ability to give expression to his thoughts. By the end of toddlerhood, the child is thinking about many more things and he is eager to give verbal expression to every thought. Piaget (1969) and Vygotsky (1962) both describe the speech of the toddler as egocentric. They differ in their interpretations of the fate of this speech in mature language. Nonetheless, it is quite clear that for a short period

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of time, the child is likely to articulate almost every thought, no matter how personal, in some form of language. This language does not always take into account the point of view of the listener. It may be presented in a telegraphic form which conveys only the essential meaning. On the other hand, the toddler is certainly capable of social speech in which he makes his meaning perfectly clear to the listener. The importance of egocentric or inner speech is that it gives us a clue about the eventual process of censureship. In listening to adult conversations, we assume that the adult thinks many more thoughts than he actually expresses. One of the challenges in interpreting group process is that one must try to give voice to fantasies and fears that are dominating the thoughts of the group members but which are only alluded to indirectly in conversation. In toddlerhood, we have the opportunity to observe the shift from total verbal openness to a gradual awareness of social norms which lead to the censureship of language. One characteristic of interpersonal style which most likely develops toward the end of toddlerhood is the person's general level of expressiveness. Some children learn to verbalize almost all their thoughts and to censure few if any of their remarks. Other children appear to be very retentive. They may feel some anxiety about speaking or they may find that it is unnecessary to say their thoughts out loud.

A second characteristic of language development during toddlerhood is, simply, the rapid acquisition of vocabulary and the accumulation of information that is associated with new words. The toddler raises many "how," "what," and "why" questions which evoke responses from adults. The quality of the adult's answers and their willingness to engage the child in conversations will determine the number of words the child can use and the level

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of abstractness or concreteness which characterizes his language. By the end of toddlerhood the child is likely to have established a conversational style which reflects the use of language in his home. (Bernstein and Henderson, 1969). He may see language as a useful tool for influence and for play or as an avenue of risk and hostility.

I would suggest then, that the two dominant characteristics of interpersonal style that are acquired during toddlerhood are 1) the expressiveness or retentiveness of speech, which grows out of the child's capacity to censure speech, and 2) the general level of abstractness of speech.

Early School Age

Language skills become significantly more complex during the years from five to seven or eight. Luria (1961) describes this age group as being able to successfully direct their motor behavior with verbal commands. The research on verbal mediation (Kendler, 1963) suggests that it is during this period that children learn to assign labels to concepts as a strategy for problem solving. Language becomes more than a symbolic system for representing thought. It is really a tool that the child begins to appreciate as having a logic and a usefulness of its own. At this age, children begin to play with language-making up new secret codes, reordering words or sounds in order to create special languages, and playing word games. Language serves as a mode for the expression of feelings and certain words take on a great power within the peer culture for evoking feelings of shame or pride. One significant development in the emergence of interpersonal style during

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early school age is, then, the ability to use language in order to control and to order the environment. Language becomes more than an expressive mode - it begins to have instrumental properties - serving the child as an effective medium for solving problems, controlling his own behavior and altering the behavior of others.

Another equally meaningful change occurs in the child's interpersonal behavior which has implications for the development of interpersonal style. The child becomes increasingly less egocentric. His relationships with people are, thus, altered along two dimensions. First, he is able to differentiate his point of view from the point of view of the other person. The age-related emergence of this ability has been demonstrated in a number of role-taking experiments in which a child is asked to differentiate his own perspective from that of another. (Havell, 1966; Selman, 1971; Chandler and Greenspan, 1972). Second, the child becomes increasingly empathic, recognizing that other people are capable of the same feelings of delight, disappointment or anxiety of which he is capable (Flapan, 1968). This reduced egocentrism appears to be the result of increased opportunities for pper interaction (Piaget, 1948) and heightened parental identification (Jacobson, 1964). The child becomes sensitive to the fact that other children do not share his precise point of view. Through peer play he learns to anticipate that other children will have different ideas about what to do, how to play or whom to follow. Because of the child's increased identification with his parents, he learns to anticipate their reactions to events and he begins to

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incorporate their values into his own self-image. His increased investment in perceiving similarity between himself and his parents forces him to try to anticipate how they would react and how they would feel so that he too can share those feelings.

Declining egocentrism should contribute a greater degree of reality orientation to interpersonal behavior as well as an increase in empathy.

Middle School Age

Two interpersonal skills emerge during the stage of middle school age (when children are between the ages of eight and twelve) which have profound implications for the development of interpersonal style. First, children become aware of rules and norms which govern their behavior (Piaget, 1969). Studies on the conformity behavior of children (Hamm and Hoving, 1969; Devereux,1969;) have demonstrated that children in this age group become more sensitive to pressures for conformity, particularly from their peers, than are younger subjects. Using the analogy of play, children want to know the rules of the game and they will insist that the rules be followed. In terms of interpersonal relationships, the awareness of norms brings about a conception of behavior that is appropriate and behavior that is inappropriate. One of the central components of leadership skills as they emerge during middle school age is the ability to identify the appropriate norms for social interaction with a variety of role groups. The "leader" knows how to talk to teachers, to the principal, to his parents and to his friends.

The second interpersonal skill of middle school age is an increasing capacity for compromise which results from the cognitive

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skills associated with concrete operational thought and the increased investment in peers. Perhaps as an outgrowth of conflicts about rules, children learn that there is more than one way to play a game. In their efforts to operate in rather large groups, children discover the principle of "give and take." They learn that problems may have more than one solution and in order to avoid alienating group members they devise compromises that will satisfy the greatest number. The notion of compromise implies that the child is aware of some hierarchy of goals. By giving up some part of what he wants with respect to one goal, he can attain greater satisfaction with respect to another goal. In thinking about interpersonal style, particularly in group situations, the ability to compromise would appear to be a fundamental characteristic of successful group members. They do not need to be constantly in the limelight, nor, on the other hand, do they abandon their personal goals to the will of the majority. They are capable of participating in discussions that do not concern them directly in order to have an opportunity to influence the group to address questions that are of more immediate concern to them. A successful orientation toward the strategy of compromise would suggest that the person has acquired some certainty about his own goals and a degree of flexibility about their implementation.

An awareness of social norms and the ability to resolve conflict through compromise are the two interpersonal skills that are central to middle school age. They have implications for participation in groups, leadership skills, and one's orientation toward conflict.

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Early Adolescence

Some of the gains in flexibility and reality orientation that seem to be made during middle school age are temporarily lost in early adolescence. Elkind (1967) describes the egocentrism of early adolescence as a preoccupation with self presentation and an assumption that others are as concerned about one's own troubles as is the adolescent himself. The skills of interaction, particularly the abilities of empathy, role taking, and compromise, may suffer from an over-concern with anxiety about personal inadequacies and desires for acceptance. In a study of tenth grade boys in two discussion groups, I found the boys to be comparatively insensitive to the needs of other group members, eager to have the group's attention, and generally awkward at expressing feelings or giving information about personal matters. Their interactions were stylized - characterized by a great deal of dramatization and bravado. I have assumed that these observations are related to an interaction between the age and sex of the group members. No studies to date have identified the unique interpersonal characteristics of adolescent females, but I would assume that they would express their egocentrism in a preoccupation with their social life, their family problems and their concerns about physical appearance. (Shipman, 1968; Douvan and Gold, 1966; Douvan and Adelson, 1966).

The emphasis on egocentrism during adolescence does not, however, give full credit to a growing capacity for leadership, decision making, and planning which also characterizes adolescent interpersonal development. As members of teams, clubs, and

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community organizations, adolescents begin to function in a variety of settings where adult authorities are not necessarily present. Adolescents learn to direct the behavior of groups of peers and to make significant personal decisions on their own. They become more independent of parental judgment and more sensitive to the goals and norms of their peer culture. A leap in conceptual skills characterized by the development of formal operational thought (Piaget, 1969) permits adolescents to generate ideas about how relationships might develop, and to create ideals for their own future interpersonal relationships. Thus, while adolescents may suffer some inhibition in the actualization of their relationships with peers, they are quite active in their conceptualization of what those relationships might someday be like.

Later Adolescence

Much of the research on social interaction during this stage is done with college populations in small group settings. It would appear that by this time, young people have become accustomed to participation in groups or teams and they have learned some of the essential techniques for the accomplishment of group goals. Observing college age Ss in groups allows one to begin to characterize individuals according to their predominant style as a group member. Bales (1970) has suggested a complex system for personality assessment which is based on verbal interaction, non-verbal interaction, and group and coder ratings of each group member. Group members can be characterized by their position in a three

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dimensional space. The polarities of the space are described as 1) passive vs. dominant, 2) aggressive vs. affiliative and 3) alienated from group beliefs vs. socially integrated and instrumental. Another study by Ringwald (1970) has identified student types on the basis of their participation in college classroom discussion groups. Once again, the themes of hostility, work orientation, and identification with the authority or the values of the group can be seen as pervading interpersonal style. These two approaches to the study of personality through the use of observations of social interaction suggest that by the stage of later adolescence, the individual's personality is consolidated enough to produce an integrated interpersonal style which communicates basic personal needs and social attitudes. By the time this state of personality formation has occurred, the individual is also capable of introspection and self awareness, empathy and sensitivity to the needs of others. His effectiveness as a participant in social groups or in dyadic relationships depends on his ability to assess his own impact on others as well as to correctly identify the expectations that others have for his behavior. It is during later adolescence that these skills are firmly established.

Implications and Conclusions

The interpersonal style of the adult is the outcome of three essential elements: 1) the person's ability to establish a feeling of intimacy, closeness and involvement with others, (Erikson, 1950); 2) his ability to use language effectively, and 3) his cognitive motivation. If we assume that these three areas of development are the components of mature interpersonal behavior, then we

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should be able to trace the path of individual differences in interpersonal style by examining the fate of these elements at each life stage. Table 1 summarizes the developmental antecedents of each element of mature interpersonal style.

The ability to develop a feeling of closeness and involvement with others, for example, can be traced to its childhood origins. The successful establishment of social attachment during infancy; the growth of empathy and the strengthening of parental identifications during early school age; participation in the peer group during middle school age; and the formation of intimate dyadic relationships during early and later adolescence (Sullivan, 1949) can all be seen as contributing factors in the eventual capacity for interpersonal intimacy.

The second component of interpersonal style which I have identified is the capacity for the effective use of language. This is an element of interpersonal behavior, which perhaps because it is so obvious, is often overlooked in the study of adult personality and social interaction. Certain distinctions have been made between the verbally active individual and the silent individual within the context of the small group setting (Bales, 1958, Rosenwein, 1973). Typically leaders in groups are characterized by a high degree of verbal activity and low participators are characterized by anxiety and feelings of inadequacy. Beyond this distinction in the quantity of verbal activity no studies have attempted to characterize the scope of adult verbal behavior. Several studies on the quality of parent-child interaction have identified characteristics of verbal behavior which might have implications for the study of interpersonal style.

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Hess and Shipman (1965) describe differences in the use of conceptual versus specific advice in a problem solving situation. Bernstein (1969) describes differences in the use of language in an interpersonal or a task situation. Neither of these studies is concerned with interpersonal style per se, but they suggest dimensions of verbal behavior including the use of abstract concepts, the orientation of verbal interaction toward explanations, commands, or expressiveness, and the flexibility of language.

Examining the development of interpersonal skill with respect to language development, it appears that infancy is a critical time for learning to evoke a social response. Toddlerhood brings the rapid acquisition of vocabulary, grammar and the use of abstract concepts. Toward the end of this period the child learns to say certain things to himself and to say other things publically. During early school age language becomes a tool for organizing the environment and for solving problems. Although there are no theories about the development of language during adolescence, I would expect that the adolescent becomes increasingly skillful at conveying his meaning and at expressing himself under a variety of environmental conditions. The development of language skills has clear implications for the quality of the individual's interactions and the degree of clarity with which he conveys his thoughts. The study of interpersonal effectiveness in marriage, childrearing and work relationships could certainly profit by an examination of individual differences in the use of language.

The third component of interpersonal skill is the maturation of cognitive capacities. Of central importance here are the decline in egocentrism and the accompanying ability to take the point of

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view of the other person; the ability to understand rules and norms; the ability to generate multiple solutions to problems; the ability to conceive of some ideal relationship which may not already exist; and the ability to introspect about oneself and one's impact on others. These skills eventually allow a person to anticipate the outcome of verbal interactions as well as to achieve some goals with respect to interpersonal effectiveness. Although adults may at times behave egocentrically and impulsively, they can, if they choose to, participate in an interpersonal relationship which is deliberate and satisfying.

In this paper, I have attempted to identify some of the skills that emerge during childhood and adolescence which provide the elements for a mature interpersonal style. Table 2 summarizes the interpersonal skills which are developed at six life stages. At each life stage, the quality of social relationships is dependent upon the person's capacity for interpersonal closeness, his ability to use language, and his cognitive maturity. I assume that the child's orientation from infancy is essentially social and interactive. For a time, his efforts to establish a well integrated self definition may interfere with social responsiveness. Eventually, however, the mature adult is capable of engaging in thoughtful relationships which preserve individual integrity and also satisfy the needs of others.

TABLE 1

THREE ELEMENTS OF MATURE INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOR AND THEIR DEVELOPMENTANT ANTECEDENTS

ANTECEDENT SKILLS	INTERPERSONAL OUTCOMES
1. SOCIAL ATTACHMENT 2. PARENTAL IDENTIFICATION 3. EMPATHY 4. PARTICIPATION IN THE PEER GROUP 5. CLOSE DYADIC FRIENDSHIPS	INTIMACY
1. EVOKING A SOCIAL RESPONSE 2. VOCABULARY AND GRAMMAR DEVELOPMENT 3. USE OF ABSTRACT CONCEPTS 4. CENSORSHIP OF SPEECH 5. USE OF LANGUAGE TO SOLVE PROBLEMS	EFFECTIVE USE OF LANGUAGE
1. DECLINING EGOCENTRISM 2. COMPREHENSION OF RULES AND NORMS 3. ABILITY TO GENERATE MULTIPLE SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS 4. ABILITY TO CONCEPTUALIZE IDEAL RELATIONSHIP 5. ABILITY TO INTROSPECT	COGNITIVE MATURITY

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TABLE 2

DEVELOPMENT OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS DURING SIX LIFE STAGES

LIFE STAGE	INTERPERSONAL SKILL(S) ACQUIRED
1. INFANCY	A. EVOKING A SOCIAL RESPONSE FROM ANOTHER B. SOCIAL ATTACHMENT TO ANOTHER PERSON
2. TODDLERHOOD	A. CENSURING OF SPEECH B. DEVELOPMENT OF VOCABULARY AND ABSTRACTION
3. EARLY SCHOOL AGE	A. DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE AS A PROBLEM SOLVING TOOL B. DECLINING EGOCENTRISM
4. MIDDLE SCHOOL AGE	A. COMPREHENDING OF RULES AND NORMS B. ABILITY TO COMPROMISE
5. EARLY ADOLESCENCE	A. HEIGHTENED EGOCENTRISM B. INCREASING INDEPENDENCE FROM AUTHORITIES
6. LATER ADOLESCENCE	A. CONSOLIDATION OF AN INTERPERSONAL STYLE B. INTROSPECTIVENESS - AWARENESS OF ONE'S INTERPERSONAL STYLE AND ONE'S IMPACT ON OTHERS

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